

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PUBLIC LAW 106-107 ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT
MAY 2004 – MAY 2005**

The United States Department of the Interior (Interior) is committed to meeting the requirements of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999, Public Law (P.L.) 106-107 and the President's Management Agenda E-Gov initiatives. In the area of Federal financial assistance, the Department is committed to:

1. improving the effectiveness and performance of Federal financial assistance programs;
2. simplifying Federal financial assistance application and reporting requirements;
3. improving the delivery of services to the public; and
4. facilitating greater coordination among those responsible for delivery of such services.

Since P.L. 106 –107 was enacted and Grants.gov was launched, Interior has continued to actively support and implement Government-wide financial assistance streamlining and simplification initiatives during the May 2004 – May 2005 reporting cycle.

I. Participation in the Government-wide Streamlining and Grants.gov Efforts

Interior has actively supported Government-wide financial assistance-related standardization and streamlining initiatives on several fronts during the reporting cycle. The planning, development, and launching of the financial assistance component of Interior's Financial and Business Management System (FBMS) afforded a number of opportunities to standardize our grant-making and administration processes.

Because the FBMS will ultimately interface with Grants.gov and related systems, e.g., Central Contractor Registration, information will only be entered once, thereby reducing errors and burdens for both the recipient and the agency. The information collection time savings realized through use of the FBMS will allow Departmental grants officers to spend more of their time managing grants and contributing to improving the effectiveness and performance of Interior's Federal financial assistance programs.

On April 5, 2005, in FBMS Deployment 1A, standardized grant-making functionality was delivered to the Interior's Office of Surface Mining(OSM), Minerals Management Service (MMS), and selected financial assistance programs within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). System-to-system tests between FBMS and Grants.gov are on-going and will continue as Interior prepares for further deployments.

These accomplishments could not have been possible without on-going agency coordination with the Grants.gov Program Management Office, participation in the various P.L. 106-107 work groups, and involvement with Grants Management Line of Business (GMLoB) Task Force activities.

The Department of the Interior continues to participate in the Pre-Award Work Group, and has provided financial support and participated in GMLoB Task Force activities by attending meetings and providing agency review and comment during the development of the GMLoB business case. Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been especially active in the National Grants Partnership's efforts to identify partners and prospective partnerships throughout the United States.

Like many of the other 26 grant-making agencies, Interior is trying to balance a highly decentralized grants management workforce with its desire to develop a group of well trained, highly competent grants managers. Interior provided competencies information during the benchmarking process, and co-chaired the recently-formed P.L. 106-107 Training and Certification Work Group competency subgroup.

Throughout the reporting cycle, Interior bureaus and offices have reviewed and provided comments/suggestions on core data elements for development of the family of Standard Form 424 grant application forms.

II. Internal Effort to Create an Environment Conducive to Grants Streamlining and Simplification and Assess Impact of Changes

From the beginning, agency management has shown its interest in and support for greater transparency in the grant-making process through standardization and streamlining of processes, policies, and systems. In a March 2, 2005 letter to Interior Federal Assistance Recipients and Prospective Applicants, the Interior Deputy Assistant Secretary – Business Management and Wildland Fire detailed the agency's plans for meeting P.L. 106-107 and E-Gov goals. The letter, which was posted to Interior's website (<http://www.doi.gov/fbms>), and provided to DOI bureaus and offices for dissemination to their recipient communities, also included a **Grants.gov Primer** to guide recipients and prospective recipients through the Grants.gov FIND and APPLY processes step-by-step. It included information on registration with Dun & Bradstreet, Central Contract Registration (CCR), and Operational Research Consultants, the Grants.gov designated Credential Provider (E-Authentication requirement).

Training Initiatives

On March 2, 2005, prior to delivery of FBMS financial assistance functionality to OSM, MMS, and FWS (selected programs), the Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget issued a memorandum to appropriate Assistant Secretaries and Bureau Directors mandating successful completion of financial assistance training by all prospective system users including reviewers and approvers of financial assistance applications. The training requirement was established not only to ensure that internal users would be fully

familiar with how FBMS and Grants.gov would work together in this new process, but also so that grant officers could convey this first-hand information to assist their recipient communities.

Outreach Activities

During the reporting cycle, bureau Grants.gov champions such as the U.S. Geological Survey, hosted outreach activities for their financial assistance program offices to familiarize them with Grants.gov. The designated agency representative from the Grants.gov Program Management Office actively participated in the March 2005 DOI FBMS-Financial Assistance training program, and conducted Grants.gov workshops at the Department-wide Business Management Conference in Ocean City, Maryland, during the week of April 11, 2005.

The Interior Office of Acquisition and Property Management developed and issued its first Quarterly Financial Assistance Newsletter in March 2005 to update the DOI grant-making community on Grants.gov and to identify and promote volunteer participation on various P.L. 106-107 work groups. The Department of the Interior is routinely well represented at Grants.gov Stakeholders meetings. All bureau/office grant officers were advised of and invited to participate in the April 2005 Grants.gov “Spread the Word” Webcast. Two representatives of the Office of Acquisition and Property Management attended a day-long Grants.gov Agency Point of Contact training workshop at the Department of Labor on May 20, 2005.

Communication Initiatives

The Department of the Interior is a highly decentralized agency with over 120 grant programs. Improving communication among bureaus/offices and many diverse grant programs has long been a matter of interest and concern to agency management. On March 29, 2005, the Department of the Interior established a Department-wide framework for improved transparency and information access in the area of Federal financial assistance. Under the policy, bureau heads were required to designate a Bureau/Office Federal Financial Assistance Communication Liaison responsible for:

- (1) Contacting appropriate personnel within their bureau/office for further details on all programs in order to respond to inquiries;
- (2) Establishing procedures to ensure that financial assistance-related information is appropriately disseminated within their respective bureau/office; and
- (3) Routinely interacting with Departmental offices, bureaus, and their own bureau/office Federal financial assistance personnel.

In addition, bureaus/offices were required to develop and implement Federal Financial Assistance Communication Improvement Plans. These plans were to include the bureau's/office's proposed communication improvements especially in the following

areas: (1) greater transparency in its financial assistance-making process through accurate profiling and posting of program opportunities at Grants.gov FIND and APPLY; (2) timely and accurate reporting of financial assistance transactions to the Federal Assistance Award Data System (FAADS); and (3) clear, concise program descriptions in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA).

Financial Assistance Policy Improvements

On March 14, 2005, interim Departmental policy was issued for comment revising existing Departmental Manual guidance to include the requirements/processes related to P.L. 106-107. The policy included definitions for discretionary and mandatory grants (a prerequisite to the establishment of a baseline for grant postings on Grants.gov), and the requirement to post all discretionary grant and cooperative agreement opportunities to Grants.gov FIND. Based on comments received, the policy has been further revised to include requirements related to accessing the Federal Audit Clearinghouse (pursuant to OMB Circular A-133) to determine when audits have been submitted and request follow-up action by the Clearinghouse if audits are not available, and the requirement to post discretionary grant and cooperative agreement application packages using the appropriate Standard Form 424 on Grants.gov.

In an effort to enhance transparency in the grant-making process, the Departmental Manual's policy regarding the use of Temporary Program Numbers (previously known as "pseudocodes") has been revised to accommodate the availability of CFDA numbers in real time, thereby limiting the need for assigning temporary numbers with limited program descriptions. One of the first tasks to be assigned Interior bureaus/offices under the new Federal Financial Assistance Communication Improvement Plan will be to review and revise financial assistance program descriptions in the CFDA, as appropriate, in order to make them more understandable, informative, and helpful to prospective recipients.

III. Implementing the Changes Affecting the Pre-Award Process

Grants.gov FIND

During the period of May 2004 – May 2005, Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the Office of the Secretary – National Business Center posted a total of 21 discretionary funding opportunities on Grants.gov FIND. In order to ensure that all eligible funding opportunities are posted, periodic program reassessment is required as a result of changes to program goals over time, appropriation modifications, formation of partnerships, etc. In the first quarter of FY 2006, Interior bureaus and offices will be required to survey all of their grant programs and establish\revise baselines for their discretionary grants within the parameters established in the Departmental policy definitions. This will allow for establishment and implementation of an agency-wide performance metric measuring the number of discretionary funding opportunities announced on Grants.gov FIND in relation to the total number eligible.

Grants.gov APPLY

During the reporting cycle, Interior developed and issued a Grants.gov APPLY “ramp up” schedule. By May 2005, Interior earned a “Goal Star” by exceeding its OMB-Grants.gov goal to post ten application packages to Grants.gov APPLY by 250% (a total of 25 application packages were posted to Grants.gov APPLY). Interior’s goal for applications received during the same period, i.e., 300 applications, was also exceeded by 168% (505 applications were received).

As a means of promoting awareness and enlisting additional bureau/office support for both Grants.gov FIND and APPLY, the Office of Acquisition and Property Management is establishing a Department of the Interior – Grants.gov Champion recognition program. In May 2005, the U.S. Geological Survey, was recognized for outstanding Grants.gov outreach efforts and significant contributions in helping the Department of the Interior exceed its APPLY goal.

As an integral part of FBMS, Grants.gov implementation, training, system-to-system testing, and data analysis are on-going. The Department of the Interior is pleased with the wide coverage of the SF 424 family of financial assistance application forms and has mandated their use through Departmental policy. Development of any additional forms, e.g., performance reporting, is being closely coordinated with the Grants.gov Program Management Office.

With regard to comments received during the reporting cycle by prospective recipients concerning Grants.gov, some first time users indicated that the initial registration steps, i.e., obtaining DUNS number, registration with CCR and the designated Credential Provider, were somewhat time consuming. However, those concerns were eased when it was explained that they would now only have to go through the registration process once in order to be eligible to submit applications Government-wide.

IV. Other

The reporting period of May 2004 – May 2005 has been a very busy one for the Department of the Interior’s financial assistance community. Policy has been revised, new Government-wide systems are being used, and a standard grant-making system is being implemented. We applaud the standardization and streamlining goals of P.L. 106-107 and the outstanding tools that Grants.gov and the Grants Management Line of Business offer in realizing them. Interior looks forward to continuing its work with Grants.gov, the Grants Management Line of Business, and the various P.L. 106-107 work groups in enhancing transparency in the grant-making process, developing training standards for a highly qualified grant-making workforce, and improving the effectiveness and performance of Federal financial assistance programs.